

Kentucky Teacher

Jill Lewis
Corbin High School
10 years in the classroom



October 2006

News for the Nation's Most Innovative Educators

www.education.ky.gov

Wilhoit accepts leadership post with national education group

By Lisa Gross

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Kentucky Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit has been selected executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), a national organization based in



Wilhoit

Washington, D.C. Wilhoit will resign from his post as commissioner effective Nov. 1 and immediately begin work in his new position.

"Although the members of the Kentucky Board of Education are saddened by Gene's decision, we recognize that this is an unprecedented professional opportunity for him," said Keith Travis, chair of the board. "Kentucky will have another strong advocate in our nation's capital, and we wish him success in his new position."

The Kentucky Board of Education will initiate a search process for the next commissioner of education. At an upcoming board meeting, members will select a search firm to manage the process.

Kevin Noland, currently deputy commissioner of the Department of Education's Bureau of Operations and Support Services, has agreed to serve as interim education commissioner during the search process.

CCSSO's board has developed an aggressive five-year strategic plan that will guide the work of the organization as it moves forward in setting the education agenda for the future. As executive director, Wilhoit will continue the strategic focus of the organization and work to assure a smooth transition.

"I'm excited about this opportunity and the possibilities it brings," Wilhoit said.

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Be available March 7-9 for KTLC '07

Mark your calendars for the 2007 Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conference (KTLC) at the Kentucky International Convention Center in Louisville. The conference, now in its 28th year, is the largest professional development opportunity in the state, offering something for administrators and educators at every level and in every content area.

The theme for this year's conference is "Rigor, Relevance and Relationships: Three R's of a 21st Century Education." The conference begins on Wednesday evening, March 7, with the keynote address and a reception. Ticketed workshops and concurrent sessions will fill the conference schedule for Thursday and Friday. There will be no Saturday sessions.



Kentucky educators can participate in the conference on two levels: as attendees and as presenters. As participants, educators will get the opportunity to participate in hands-on as well as minds-on activities that can be implemented in their schools and classrooms to impact or support student learning.

As presenters, educators have the opportunity to share research- and standards-based ideas and strategies that are working

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Photo by Rick McComb

Sharing a love for reading

New Castle Elementary (Henry County) primary student Devin Trautwein gives Zoom, a Cardigan Welsh Corgi, the opportunity to look at the illustrations as he reads to the dog. Zoom, an assistance dog, comes to the school once a week to participate in the Tell-a-Tail project that is helping struggling readers improve their reading skills. (See story on Page 4.)

Online Data Tools can help educators delve into 2006 CATS results

By Faun S. Fishback

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Results from last spring's administration of the Kentucky Core Content Tests (KCCT) and the nationally norm-referenced tests (NRT) were released to schools and the public in September. Accountability Cycle 2006 data have told public schools in all 175 districts where they stand in the journey to proficiency and beyond by 2014.

While the combined 2004-2006 index provides a new marker to indicate progress on each school's growth chart, Kentucky public school educators know that getting the results is just the tip of the iceberg. To truly understand what those results mean, educators must delve deeper into the accountability data to determine the significance to the district, to a school,

to a classroom and to an individual student. Educators throughout the state are beginning the process of deciphering the data.

The Kentucky Department of Education provides the tools to help schools delve into the data generated by the KCCT and NRT. By using these Data Tools, district administrators, school administrators and teachers can better interpret, predict and use the results to improve teaching and learning in their schools.

"It won't help if you just look at the results," said Rhonda Sims, director of the department's Division of Assessment Support. "Teachers need to look deeply at the results — take the data to the student level, put a face on each piece of data — and use

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Bulletin Board



Photo by Rick McComb

Franklin County High School

Bulletin Board is compiled by Joy Barr
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Conferences

Counselors' conference

The Kentucky Counseling Association (KCA) annual conference is Oct. 17-20 at the Executive West in Louisville.
www.kyca.org

Science teachers meet

The Kentucky Science Teachers Association will meet Nov. 2-4 at the Hyatt Regency in Lexington. The theme is "Building an Understanding in Science: No Child Left Behind."
www.ksta.org

Think Inc.

The Kentucky Council on Economic Education invites high school teachers to Think Inc., a conference designed to showcase high-quality economic and business-related curriculum materials. The conference will be Nov. 9 at Northern Kentucky University in Highland Heights.
www.econ.org/thinkinc

Health and physical education

The Kentucky Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance has set Nov. 8-10 for its annual convention at the Hyatt Regency Lexington. "Work in Progress: Coming Together and Staying on Course" is the theme.
www.kahperd.com

Title I conference

The 28th annual Title I conference is set for Nov. 13-14 at the Executive Inn-Rivermont in Owensboro.
www.grrec.ky.gov

English/language arts conference

The Kentucky Council of Teachers of English/Language Arts will hold its 71st annual conference Feb. 9-10, 2007, at the Marriott Griffin Gate in Lexington.
<http://conference.kcte.org>

Events

Future City

Kentucky schools are invited to participate in the 2007 National Engineers Week Future City Competition on Saturday, Jan. 20, 2007, at the University of Kentucky College of Engineering. The competition introduces teams of students to engineering through practical applications of mathematics and science, and hands-on work with engineers. Schools are asked to register online by Oct. 15.

Contact: Diana Anderson, Kentucky Future City Competition Coordinator, (606) 337-4386, diana.anderson@pineville.kyschools.us
www.futurecity.org

Old Fort Harrod

Old Fort Harrod State Park is available for school field trips year-round. Costumed interpreters are at the park from April 16 through Oct. 31. The museum and gift shops are open from March 16 through Nov. 30. Cost is \$2 per student in groups of 20 or more.

www.parks.ky.gov/stateparks/fh/schooltrips.htm

Stage One

Narnia comes to life at Stage One in Louisville in a musical adaptation by Jules Tasca based on *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*. Performances for school groups are Nov. 27-Dec. 17. Recommended for grades 3-10. Performances are at 10 a.m. and noon.

Box office: (502) 562-0100
www.stageone.org/season

Poster contest

Kentucky students (P-12) can participate in a national conservation poster contest. The theme for the 2006 poster contest is "Water Wise." The deadline is Dec. 1.

<http://nacdnet.org/outreach/awards/poster.htm>

Prudential Spirit of Community Awards

Nov. 7 is the deadline for students in grades 5-12 to submit applications to the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program. The program recognizes young people, who through volunteer activities, are making their communities better places to live.

www.principals.org/awards/prudential.cfm

Resources

Kentucky Bluegrass Awards

The Kentucky Bluegrass Awards, sponsored by the Kentucky Reading Association, annually recognizes books chosen by students across the state as the best books for their grade level. This year's winning titles are:

Grades K-2: *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale* by Mo Willems

Grades 3-5: *The Report Card* by Andrew Clements

Grades 6-8: *So B. It* by Sarah Weeks

Grades 9-12: *Looking for Alaska* by John Green

<http://kba.nku.edu>

EKU Writing Project Fellows

The Eastern Kentucky University Writing Project (WP) is updating its mailing list so all WP Fellows can stay informed about the many opportunities available. If you are an ECU WP Fellow, e-mail your name, participation year, preferred e-mail address and preferred telephone number to Jessica Goodpaster at writingproject@clark.kyschools.us.

Music and mathematics

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics is offering Using Music to Teach Mathematics grants. Grants of \$3,000 are available to early primary (K-2) teachers to incorporate music into their mathematics classes. The deadline is Nov. 3.

<http://nctm.org/about/met/mendlesohn.htm>

KCEE

The Kentucky Council on Economic Education (KCEE) offers many programs suitable for all grades. The Stock Market Game and Take Stock in Kentucky are just two of the many offerings.

Contact: Susan Sandage at KCEE, (502) 213-4557, susan@econ.org

www.econ.org

Kids Voting

Election Day is Nov. 7. One way students can learn about the voting process is through Kids Voting Kentucky. It is a nonprofit, non-partisan program dedicated to civics education. It currently operates in eight counties. A part of Kids Voting Kentucky is a mock election that brings children to the polls to vote with their parents. Another component of Kids Voting Kentucky is the Civics Alive curriculum. P-12 teachers may access lesson plans online or from a CD-ROM.

Contact: Joe Gershtenson, (859) 622-2606, joe.gershtenson@eku.edu, or Mark Neikirk, (513) 352-2783, mneikirk@cincypost.com

www.kidsvotingusa.org

Commissioner's Comments

Thanks for your commitment to Kentucky public education

By Gene Wilhoit

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In September, I made one of the most difficult decisions of my life. As a result of that decision, in just a few short weeks I will no longer be Kentucky's commissioner of education and no longer directly involved in leading Kentucky's public education system.

In early November, I am beginning work as executive director of a national education organization, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). This organization provides leadership, advocacy and technical assistance on major educational issues to the men and women who lead public education departments in every state and the District of Columbia, schools on U.S. military bases around the world and schools in U.S. territorial jurisdictions.

This is a chance for me to help shape state and national education policy to better serve all children in our public schools and to serve state education leaders across this country. I trust that Kentucky will benefit from my work with CCSSO.

The media coverage surrounding my resignation announcement earlier this fall contained references to "my accomplishments" as commissioner of education. However, I know — and have been quick to point out — that these were not "my" accomplishments.

I cannot claim credit for the strides that have been made in public education in Kentucky over the past six years while I was commissioner. Steadily rising student achievement at all levels and in all content areas on the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) and the National Assessment of Education Program (NAEP) is not the work of one person.

That's the beauty of education reform in Kentucky: progress in our schools depends on the leadership and commitment of adults at the local level — teachers, administrators, school boards, parents and school council members. The Kentucky Board of Education and the Kentucky Department of Education have worked hard over the past six years to involve Kentucky's education professionals in shaping our state education system.

Each time we have asked for your help in improving public education in this state, you have answered the call. Thousands of you have been involved in making CATS one of the most respected education systems in the nation.

Kentucky educators at all levels and from all content areas have been involved in CATS from the earliest blueprints of the Kentucky Core Content Tests to the recent revisions of *Kentucky's Core Content for Assessment* and the *Program of Studies*.

When the department received grants to fund leadership training that focused on instruction, superintendents, principals and district leaders stepped up to the challenge. The Superintendents CEO Network, e-Walk training for school and district administrators, and, most recently, the Executive Lead-



Kentucky Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit listens to primary student Kaleb Costello, left, as he talks about helping his mother care for his younger brother during summer vacation during a visit to Summer Shade Elementary (Metcalf County). Visits to Kentucky schools to talk with students, teachers and administrators have been a priority during Wilhoit's term as commissioner.

ership Training Program for Educators at Harvard are empowering school leaders to lead change, reduce barriers at the state level and improve teaching and learning in our public schools.

The number of highly qualified educators in Kentucky and the rapidly increasing number of National Board Certified Teachers in every district are a testament to the professionalism of Kentucky's classroom teachers. You are constantly striving to increase your instructional skills to find ways to help every student achieve. You have been strong partners in improving education for nearly 660,000 Kentucky young people every year.

Elementary school teachers have taken the tenets of education reform and made success happen in their schools. The progress of most elementary schools has set the pace in Kentucky.

I leave knowing our work must continue. I will be following closely the work that has begun in middle and high schools across Kentucky to increase rigor, relevance and relationships at the secondary level to better engage older students in learning. It is vital to Kentucky that our young people leave high school with a diploma, prepared for postsecondary studies and careers.

In the six years I've been Commissioner of Education for Kentucky, our public schools have made steady progress toward proficiency. On average, double-digit increases in school improvement have occurred at each level — elementary, middle and high schools. However, gaps in learning still exist and progress is slower than we might like, but schools are closing the achievement

gaps between groups of students. Most of us engaged in Kentucky education believe that every child — despite his or her race or culture, family income level or diverse learning need — deserves a quality education.

We can always do better — and many schools will need to do much better if they are going to reach proficiency or go beyond it by 2014. However, we are making progress toward that state and national goal. You have shown that caring education professionals who provide rigorous instruction can help all students overcome perceived barriers to learning.

The highlights of my term as commissioner of education have been the visits to your schools. I have enjoyed talking with you dedicated professionals, celebrating your accomplishments, discussing your concerns and meeting those precious children.

It's been my pleasure to work with many of you on the advisory councils I created to help inform our education policies in Kentucky. I have benefited from the friendships I've made in schools and districts throughout the state. And, I thank you for that.

I leave Kentucky knowing that our public schools are in good hands. Superintendents, local board members, district administrators, principals, teachers and school councils throughout the state share with the state board, department staff and me a total commitment to moving every public school student to higher levels of learning.

Many of you are as passionate as I am about getting every school to proficiency and beyond by 2014. You share the vision of Kentucky public schools where there are

no achievement gaps, where every child reads at or above grade level and where every student who enters high school stays to receive a diploma.

Kevin Noland, who serves as one of my deputy commissioners, will be interim commissioner while the Kentucky Board of Education conducts a search for my successor. He, Deputy Commissioner Linda France and perhaps other department leaders will continue to communicate with you in this space about education issues until a new commissioner of education is appointed.

As I said, this has been one of the most difficult decisions of my life. Kentucky has been home to me since my days as an undergraduate at Georgetown College. My time in the Department of Education, as an associate commissioner and as commissioner, has been the most rewarding and satisfying part of my career.

However, I am beginning the next chapter of my life confident that no matter who follows me in this position, Kentucky educators and administrators will demand that the commonwealth's education system is the finest in the country.

I know you will continue to provide opportunities for all Kentucky public school students to learn at high levels and prepare to take their places as contributing adults in Kentucky's future.

Thank you for all you have done and will continue to do for public education in Kentucky!

(To comment on this topic, contact Commissioner Wilhoit at gene.wilhoit@education.ky.gov.)

Zoom, the dog, creates ‘pawsitive’ reading experiences

By Joy Barr

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Besides being man’s best friend and companion, dogs have been trained to help people with visual impairments, to sniff for explosives and drugs, and to provide a soothing calm for hospital patients. Now, some dogs have found a niche as good listeners in classrooms.

Zoom, a Cardigan Welsh Corgi, puts a smile on many students’ faces and helps them relax and feel more comfortable while they are reading at New Castle Elementary (Henry County). Zoom provides a non-threatening environment for children to learn to read.

“If they make a mistake, the dog isn’t going to correct them,” said Mary Roberts, Title I teacher at the school. “The dog is not going to laugh at them. It’s just going to listen and love every word they say.”

When Principal Barbara James came to the Henry County school, a few of the 400 students — especially in the intermediate grades — were classified as non-readers. Now, thanks to an intensive focus on reading at the early stages and efforts to help the older, struggling readers, there are no non-readers at the P-5 school.

New Castle Elementary teachers have used many different programs to create student interest in reading. But, James had to look no further than in her own school

building for an innovative literacy program to help increase reading interest and success. That innovation came in the form of a grandmother and her dog.

Deb Richeson, the grandmother of a student at New Castle Elementary, became aware of the school’s push for literacy while volunteering at the school. She offered her dog Zoom’s services to the school as part of the “Tell-a-Tail” program.

Students read to Zoom, while petting and snuggling with him. He visits the school every Wednesday to lend his nonjudgmental ears to struggling readers’ voices. When the students first met Zoom, one child quickly pointed out, “He’s got big ears. He’s made to listen.”

Roberts, the Title I teacher, works specifically with primary students who are struggling readers. She implemented the Tell-a-Tail program, which is designed to complement the literacy programs already in place at the school.

Each Thursday, Roberts assigns new books to her students so they can practice reading until the next Wednesday when Zoom comes to school.

“We want to make reading more enjoyable,” Roberts said of the school’s decision to adopt the Tell-a-Tail program. By adding a dog to the mix, students have become excited about reading. “I don’t ever want reading to be

stiff,” she added.

The school is always open to trying innovative literacy strategies, hoping to tap into as many ways of learning as possible. “To think that all children are going to learn the same way — that’s not the way it is,” Roberts said.

As the students read with Zoom, Richeson, his owner, provides assistance in sounding out words and gives prompts when students need help. When the students complete their reading assignments, she asks them questions to ensure they understand what they’ve read.

Because of this added support from someone other than their everyday teacher, Roberts believes her students greatly benefit from the Tell-a-Tail project.

While Zoom may not have been “made” to listen, he certainly has been trained to do so. Zoom was trained as a therapy, or assistance, dog. Certified by Therapy Dogs International, Zoom underwent — and passed — a battery of tests designed to ensure that his temperament, behavior and skills are suitable for working with people, either in a clinical setting like a hospital or library or school. The dog frequently is evaluated to make sure nothing changes with his ability to work with the students.

“Animals like Zoom have a calming effect,” his owner said. Richeson explained that clinical

research has proven that for students who like animals, petting, touching and talking with animals can lower a student’s blood pressure, relieve stress and ease depression. That calming effect can be particularly important in classrooms where students must overcome obstacles to learning, she added.

Zoom and Richeson have been regular fixtures in the school for the last two years. Richeson works closely with Roberts, the students’ teacher, in selecting materials for students to use. Partnering with a classroom teacher helps the program succeed because it reinforces what is already being taught in the classroom and enhances reading strategies and methods. It is that extra something that may work for a student. “It is definitely a team approach,” said Roberts.

Bradley, a student at New Castle Elementary, loves to read to Zoom. He says it makes him feel great and helps him feel more comfortable when reading aloud. When he is relaxed, he concentrates and the words flow, he said. Zoom also has helped him improve his self-esteem, developing confidence as his reading skills progress, according to his teachers.

Tavey, another student, believes that Zoom has helped him read better because now he feels better about himself. “I enjoy reading now,” said Tavey.

Zoom’s presence in the school also has had a positive impact upon a student identified as a “selective mute.” Teachers at the school had used many strategies to get the child to communicate, from sign language to merely nodding yes or no.

When Zoom visited the special education classroom, he and the little girl became instant friends. Now, the student will read voluntarily in the classroom with Zoom’s motivation.

“I cried the first time I heard her read. I never knew she could read,” said Kim Moody, special education teacher at the school.

Amber, another student at New Castle Elementary, read *The Cooking Pot* to Zoom while he lay with his head in her lap. “Zoom reminds me of home,” she said. “It is so relaxing.”

At New Castle Elementary, students who read to Zoom and reach targeted reading goals earn a certificate and badge signed personally by Zoom — giving the students another ‘pawsitive’ experience with reading.

MORE INFO ...

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Mary Roberts, (502) 845-8650, mary.roberts@henry.kyschools.us



Photo by Rick McCormick

Zoom, whose ears prompted one New Castle Elementary student to describe the dog as being “made to listen,” does just that as he joins Cody Thomas on the classroom floor to read a book.

Assistance dogs prepare to work with students

Therapy Dogs International (TDI) is a group of volunteers organized to provide qualified handlers and therapy dogs for visitations to institutions, hospitals, schools and libraries — any place therapy dogs are needed.

TDI supports a program, “Children Reading to Dogs,” that connects handlers with schools that request therapy dog visits. There are no direct costs to a school. The dog’s handler volunteers his or her time.

Therapy dogs come in all breeds and sizes. Each must pass a series of tests that determines if the animal is suitable for working with individuals and groups of people.

Animals are well-groomed and cleaned before visits to lessen the likelihood of any allergic reaction by a participant. The program may not be appropriate or enjoyable for people who suffer from severe dog allergies. While fear of a dog is unusual, no one is ever forced to interact with a therapy dog.

www.tdi-dog.org/whatdo.html

KEEN puts Transportation engineers in classrooms

A KEEN idea is taking shape in Kentucky and a unique partnership is being developed between Kentucky schools and the state Transportation Cabinet.

As part of the program known as the Kentucky Engineering Exposure Network (KEEN), engineers employed with the Transportation Cabinet visit schools throughout the state to discuss the applications of mathematics and science in daily situations. They also make students aware of the opportunities and challenges available to students in the field of engineering.

KEEN provides opportunities for both the state government agency and local schools to work together. The program also allows Transportation Cabinet engineers to contribute to the students within their own communities. The KEEN is aligned to "Kentucky's Learning Goals and Academic Expectations" and to the "Program of Studies for Kentucky Schools Primary – 12 (2006)." The program helps students apply the basic skills in mathematics and science as they relate to real-life situations.



Kentucky Transportation Cabinet employee, Jesse Moore, left, works with students from a Michigan school who visited the cabinet offices during a school trip. The students are testing a bridge they constructed using mathematics and science skills as part of a KEEN activity.

"The topic was extremely interesting, and the presentation was simple enough for the students to answer the questions posed to them, but it also developed their thinking skills and encouraged them to further investigate the topic," said Linda Sorrell, a fifth-grade teacher at Florence Elementary School (Boone County). "The students were going home to quiz and impress their parents by all that was learned."

The KEEN program in Kentucky began in 1991 as a result of efforts by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' Task Force on Recruitment and Retention of Transportation Professionals. It was the first program of its type in the nation. Since implementation,

the program has reached more than 100,000 Kentucky students.

KEEN coordinators, located in each of the Transportation Cabinet's 12 district offices, will coordinate with local teachers to make presentations tailored to elementary, middle and high school students. Presentations are adapted to the different age groups. Topics range from the work of engineers to computer applications and scholarship programs.

MORE INFO ...

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<http://transportation.ky.gov/Education/keen/home.htm>

Learn to teach Internet safety

Social networking sites like MySpace, Xanga and Facebook are the new social gathering grounds for students on the Internet. For example, MySpace has more than 72 million users and is currently the No. 1 marketing space anywhere.

Social networking Internet sites, text messaging, instant messaging, chat rooms, web logs (blogs), video logs (vlogs) and other Web communications have replaced e-mail, telephone and face-to-face conversation for today's students. They use the Internet to interact with each other and make friends. However, spending time in cyberspace — essentially unsupervised by adults — also makes young people vulnerable to potential dangers like pornography, hate sites, inappropriate how-to sites (i.e., assisted suicide), cyber-bullying, predators, computer viruses and more.

The Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS) strives to protect students, both in the physical and virtual world, by making them and adults aware of



Illustration by John Boone

appropriate behavior on the Internet. KCSS is partnering with the Kentucky Department of Education, law enforcement agencies and other Kentucky groups to raise awareness through i-Safe. This congressionally endorsed P-12 Internet safety curriculum, aligned to Kentucky's Core Content, educates adults and youth on appropriate Internet behavior and staying safe online.

KCSS offers school district and community organization representatives the opportunity to become certified i-Safe trainers through its i-Safe "Train the

Trainer" model, which provides six hours of Effective Instructional Leadership Act (EILA) credit. KCSS will hold regional trainings Oct. 27 in Lexington; March 16, 2007, in Louisville; and June 8, 2007, in Owensboro. The center also provides on-site training on a first-come basis.

The i-Safe training addresses:

- Teaching students the dangers of the Internet (including social networking) and how to make appropriate responses
- Preventing students from becoming victims of Internet predators
- Understanding plagiarism and intellectual property
- Teaching students to be responsible cyber citizens
- Using i-Safe curriculum to meet Kentucky's Core Content requirements

MORE INFO ...

www.kycss.org — Click on "Complete Events Calendar" at bottom of right-hand menu for online registration.

'Literacy Strategies in Action' is teaching tool for primary

The Kentucky Department of Education, in collaboration with Kentucky Educational Television, has produced a professional development tool for primary teachers. "Literacy Strategies in Action" is a two-disc CD-ROM package designed to advance teacher expertise in delivering high-quality literacy instruction to primary students.

A free copy of "Literacy Strategies in Action" is being mailed in late October to library media specialists at all elementary schools with primary classes. The CD set will be made available in the professional library at each school.

Funded by the Reading First and Read to Achieve initiatives, "Literacy Strategies in Action" includes more than 100 video clips of exemplary Kentucky primary classroom teachers demonstrating literacy practices that are scientifically research based.

Disc One presents instruction in the five essential components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics and word study, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. On Disc Two, teachers demonstrate the connection of writing to reading acquisition, share literacy highlights from a multi-age classroom, provide teaching tips, present models of explicit lessons and suggest additional support materials.

This professional development tool provides opportunities for teachers to be reflective practitioners, as individuals and members of school teams, as they examine, reflect and talk about their practices in relation to students' literacy successes. The CD set can be used in a variety of ways to help teachers with reading instruction:

- At faculty meetings or as part of monthly professional development sessions, teachers could discuss one strategy or essential component before implementing it in their classrooms. During follow-up activities, teachers could share how the strategy helped their students.
- Grade-level meetings could focus on one essential component that met the needs of teachers and students in that primary level. Those teachers could use the component's strategies for a period of time and report results.
- Family Literacy Nights could be used to discuss specific strategies with parents and explain how they could use the strategies while reading at home with their children.
- Teachers can use the CD set for self-study on one literacy area and share his or her classroom results and invite other teachers to observe his or her instruction.
- Teachers can select one of the professional resources offered in the CD set for a book study.

MORE INFO ...

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Sharla Six, (502) 564-7056, sharla.six@education.ky.gov

Project Learning Tree facilitator training set

Project Learning Tree (PLT) facilitator training for P-12 teachers and non-formal educators will be held January 4-5, 2007, at the Kentucky Leadership Center in Jabez (Russell County). The training will showcase the new PLT P-8 guide and new high school modules for "Places We Live and Forests of the World."

The registration fee of \$75 includes one night's lodging, meals and supplies. Registration deadline is Dec. 20, 2006.

PLT is a national multi-disciplinary environmental education curriculum for P-12 classrooms. Through PLT, students learn environmental content that correlates to national and state standards in science, social studies, language arts, mathematics and other subjects. Lessons help students

strengthen their critical thinking, team building and problem solving skills.

In addition, selected programs from the Earth & Sky radio series can be used to enhance learning with correlated PLT lessons. The daily radio program features interviews with scientists who observe the world, create hypotheses, and make and test predictions. The programs are broadcast on commercial, public and satellite radio networks as well as online at the Earth & Sky Web site.

MORE INFO ...

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www.plt.org
www.earthsky.org

Three middle schools are recognized

By Cathy Lindsey

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Middle school education is playing a key role in the Kentucky Department of Education's initiative to refocus secondary education in Kentucky. Students in the sixth grade now must begin an Individual Learning Plan to prepare for their future education as they transition from middle to high school and then on to postsecondary education and the workplace.

"Middle-level education plays a huge role in the success of students at the secondary level and beyond," said Julia Harmon, Department of Education middle school consultant. "Rigor, relevance and relationships are the core principles behind good middle schools. Without one of these three components, students can begin to be disengaged with education."

Kentucky education leaders know that middle schools must keep students engaged in learning and give them a firm education foundation on which they can build a love for lifelong learning. When schools do an exemplary job of providing support and success for middle school students, the Kentucky Schools To Watch program recognizes them.

Three schools were chosen last spring as models of academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity and organizational structures that sustain dynamic improvement and reform in their middle grades.

Those Kentucky Schools To Watch are James T. Alton Middle School (Hardin County), Crosby Middle School (Jefferson County) and South Oldham Middle School (Oldham County).

James T. Alton Middle School

James T. Alton is a school that takes pride in the climate of growth it continues to cultivate. That is evident by the school's motto: "JTA – Where Pride Promotes Performance." The school has grown from a Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) accountability index of 66.3 in 2001 to 78.9 in 2005 and has reduced the percent of students who scored novice from 26.38 in 2001 to 16.74 in 2005.

Placing students and teachers in "teams" plays a key role in the success of the school, according to Jama Bennett, principal at this Hardin County school. Teaming is very similar to the concept of small learning communities within large schools.

"Teaming allows middle school students to have a sense of family, which helps address some of the issues students face during this time in their lives," Bennett said.

Each team has a team name, motto, color and mascot. Flags representing each team hang in the cafeteria. Teams are created based on the personalities of teachers and the learning styles of students.

"Having four teachers on a team allows for each teacher to specialize in a core content area," Bennett said. "In addition, teachers are able to collaborate across the curriculum, make connections and focus



Involved parents are a vital part of student success at James T. Alton Middle School (Hardin County). Dianne Johnson, a parent who has been involved in the school council and other school programs, leaves the school with her younger child after helping with an activity.

on real-life applications."

Teachers form "networks" both horizontally and vertically when they work in teams. They build on content each year and work together to address student needs throughout the student's time in middle school. Common planning time for each team, department meetings and interdisciplinary meetings provide opportunities for teachers to learn and reflect on their teaching practices.

"Teaming also provides consistency for students as teachers work together and are on the 'same sheet of music,'" Bennett said. "They meet weekly to discuss curriculum, instruction and assessment, along with addressing other items of school-, team- or grade-level business."

The curriculum demonstrates that it is both socially significant and relevant to the personal interests of young adolescents. Students get to choose projects from lists

in science, social studies and mathematics. In language arts, they choose writing tasks and topics for writing assignments.

The school continually adapts curriculum, instruction, assessment and scheduling to meet its students' diverse and changing needs, Bennett said. The school uses ThinkLink's PAS (predictive assessment systems) to monitor teaching and learning.

"This is a form of assessment we use throughout the year to monitor student progress in various content areas," Bennett said. "It is linked to the Kentucky Core Content and provides our school with information on individual strengths and areas for improvement."

There are many opportunities at Alton Middle School for student recognition — individually and within teams. Individually, students get positive verbal feedback and postcards with a positive note from their teacher, as well as recognition for high grades on the Principal's Honor Award and regular Honor Roll.

Throughout the year, teams compete for banners that are added to their flags. Teams compete for highest attendance, highest Reading Counts percentages, Pride Day, honor roll and least number of discipline referrals. At the end of the year, the team with the greatest number of banners is deemed "Team of the Year." That team is rewarded with a special trip.

Bennett attributes the school's success to wonderful students, great parents, outstanding faculty and staff, all encompassed



Sixth-grade mathematics teacher Emily Rickert gives instructions to help students solve a problem in her classroom at Crosby Middle School in Jefferson County.

for preparing students for success

by a supportive community.

"We are one big family at Alton," she said, "and the pride we have in our school truly does promote outstanding performance."

Crosby Middle School

Crosby Middle School has consistently exceeded its Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) goal for the last three biennia. Staff members use job-embedded professional development that includes examining student work and a lesson study plan to improve the teaching and learning process.

The lesson study and tuning teams provide teachers with creative ways to improve their instruction. Through the lesson study, teachers in the same content area and grade level develop a lesson, observe one another teaching the lesson and work together to refine the lesson. The tuning teams — an administrator and three teachers in the same subject and grade level — use open-response student work to evaluate and reevaluate their teaching techniques.

"Both tuning teams and lesson study allow teachers to support one another while providing each other with feedback," said Kirk Lattimore, Crosby Middle principal.

This Jefferson County middle school serves a very diverse student population of more than 1,200 students. The large school is organized into three teams per grade level. Four to five teachers share the same students and planning periods.

"These teams are families within the school body," said Lattimore. "They focus on creating a safe, nurturing and supportive network for students and parents."

Staff members say they appreciate that school leaders are always visible in hallways, classrooms and the lunchroom. One assistant principal's office is located on the second floor of the building. Each of the school's assistant principals is assigned to one grade level, which allows each administrator to better know the students. Principal Lattimore frequently conducts walkthrough observations of classrooms.

Lattimore also sets the tone and focus for each school year with his "State of the School Address." The principal says he takes the opportunity during opening days for teachers to reflect on the school's past accomplishments, academic progress, areas

for growth and vision for Crosby Middle's future.

Teachers and administrators at Crosby Middle work to keep students engaged in school activities. Most students are involved in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. For example, the Drama Club, Advanced Art, Circus for Kids, the Book Club, Cougar Pride Week and Junior Achievement address a variety of skills and help students develop diverse interests and talents.

Community volunteers play a big role in the success of the school, Lattimore said. The Book Buddy program and Every 1 Reads match volunteers with students who have been identified with low reading skills. The volunteers meet regularly with the students to read and discuss books. Also, parent volunteers are involved with the development of writing portfolios.

"Our school success is due to the collaborative effort of excellent students, supportive parents, and a competent and caring staff," Lattimore said.

South Oldham Middle School

The staff at South Oldham Middle has created an environment that nurtures the whole child through the team concept, a mentoring program and a focus on wellness and character building. Teachers and administrators have built strong partnerships among all stakeholders, which enables them to better meet the needs of their students.

The goal at this Oldham County middle school is to offer a wide range of support services that address the unique learning needs of all students during this critical time of growth and development. Everyone in the building is responsible for the actions of the students.

Those responsibilities are spelled out in the Pyramid of Interventions. This systematic approach to educating the whole child provides support, interventions and resources to students.

"It (the pyramid) is organized according to levels, and it empowers teachers to work with students without needing specific support from another staff member," said Rob Clayton, interim principal.

On the Pyramid of Interventions, services have been arranged in a continuum from the least intensive supports to those that are highly specialized to best utilize all available resources. Base-line support services include



Kentucky Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit, left, spoke with students and faculty during an assembly program last spring to celebrate South Oldham Middle School's recognition as a Kentucky School to Watch.

Parent Education, a Counselor Watch to proactively plan for possible issues with individual students and a summer orientation program for all incoming sixth graders.

Levels I and II of the Pyramid of Interventions are team-controlled. These supports involve all teachers in student conferencing, peer tutoring, mentoring and the JOBS program.

The school emphasizes building relationships and spending time with adults through the JOBS program. Students perform tasks around the school under the supervision of an adult team member who also serves as a mentor.

"The jobs program is designed to give students a connection to the school through a specific responsibility," Clayton said. "It provides students with an adult mentor in the building and is an important aspect of relationship building with at-risk students."

Levels III and IV require some assistance from an administrator. Supports in these levels include detention, loss of student privileges, parent conferencing, referral to re-teaching and remediation (R&R) and referral to the GAP process, which involves all teachers and an administrator working closely together in an effort to determine successful strategies for struggling students, Clayton explained.

R&R is an after-school class for students who receive a midterm

or grade report of "D" or "F." Students are expected to attend R&R until they have improved their grade to a "C" or better. This program is designed to serve as a support to the student, not as a punishment, Clayton said.

South Oldham also uses an online network folder system for educators to share assessment data, student data and school-related forms. Teachers share grade data, novice data, Friday School data and other student information via the online network folder system. This system reinforces the teachers' commitment to the practice of re-teaching versus remediation.

"It allows staff to use their time more efficiently, which in turn allows staff more time to work with students," Clayton said.

South Oldham Middle has experienced a steady increase in the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) results — from 82.7 in 2000 to 94.6 in 2005. The school consistently

places in the top 20 percent of middle schools in Kentucky.

The school welcomes and encourages parents on a regular basis, Clayton said. The school council reports a 90 percent attendance rate for parents in school activities and family night events.

The school includes families and community members in setting and supporting the school's trajectory toward high performance. Staff members claim teachers and administrators are "progressive" in seeing and getting what the school needs and also in tapping community resources.

Clayton attributes the success of South Oldham Middle School to students and parents who generally value education.

"We have a positive culture of high expectations and organization, caring adults who value building relationships, and we're a safe place for kids to learn," he said.

MORE INFO . . .

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Rob Clayton, (502) 241-0320, rob.clayton@oldham.kyschools.us

Kirk Lattimore, (502) 485-8235, kirk.lattimore@jefferson.kyschools.us

www.schoolstowatch.org/state/list.htm

CheyAnne Fant measures success by students' accomplishments

By Joy Barr

joy.barr@education.ky.gov

Family and Consumer Science classes at Barren County High School focus on preparing students to become well-balanced individuals who can contribute to their families and the community. CheyAnne Fant, one of three Family and Consumer Science teachers at the Glasgow school, is advancing that mission in her daily curricula.

Because of her significant and innovative efforts in family and consumer sciences, Fant recently received the New Professional Award from the National Association of Teacher Educators for Family and Consumer Sciences. She received a scholarship to Johnson & Wales University, a highly respected culinary skills school, to attend a culinary academy during the summer and a \$500 award.

Fant is in her seventh year of teaching in the Career and Technical Education Department at Barren County High School. Department classes are designed to introduce students to a variety of career areas — agriculture, business, family and consumer science, medical services and technical education — through hands-on and on-the-job opportunities.

Within the department, the Family and Consumer Science program offers career majors in Hospitality Services, Culinary Skills, Family and Community Services, Child Development Services, and Interior and Fashion Design. Fant teaches Hospitality Services and Culinary Skills that are relevant to the current hospitality industry and meet national education standards — all while giving students a variety of fun learning experiences.

"I develop relationships with many of my students, which strengthens them academically and in their personal lives," said Fant. She encourages students to get involved in projects that serve the community.

Fant began one service-learning project, Designer Angels, a few years ago. Students in foods classes work with students in fashion design class to raise money to buy clothes and gifts for Barren County children in foster care.

The foods classes make and sell quart jar cookie mixes, while students in the fashion design class organize a schoolwide contest selling paper angels for 25 cents. The entrepreneurship/banking classes also help with the Designer Angels project by collecting the money or organizing the distribution of funds for shopping. Last year, the students raised a total of \$3,200 for the project, \$100 for each foster child.

The Family and Consumer Science classes are organized around core content for practical living and the Kentucky Occupational Skills Standards. The classes challenge students to see the connection between what they are doing in school and their career goals — especially the ties to mathematics and science.

Fant collaborates with other content teachers to help students connect knowledge across the curriculum, she said. Family and consumer science classes have collaborated with science classes to look at the structure

food lunch where they studied the structure of trans fats in French fries. An outdoor learning center gives students opportunities to grow and study tomatoes, peppers and herbs.

In addition, Fant's classes also write portfolio pieces, read industry-related materials and learn about career-related skills.

Fant has bachelor's degrees in Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management and in Family and Consumer Science Education, and a master's degree in Exceptional Education from Western Kentucky University.

Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) and the Key Club at the 1,100-plus student body. "Mrs. Fant truly personifies the qualities of a dedicated teacher," stated Hale.

"I am thrilled to teach about the exciting happenings in the hospitality industry, manage catering events and the perks of being a teacher," said Fant. "I love to watch the students grow and learn as they have hands-on experiences in the Commercial Foods and Hospitality class.

"Whether or not my students become hotel managers, restaurant owners or sim-



CheyAnne Fant, right, a Family and Consumer Science teacher at Barren County High School, supervises senior Scott Wilson as he makes chocolate garnishes for cheese cake. Fant's students cater local events as part of their service learning.

of fabrics and how dye adheres to different fibers. The students tie-dyed shirts in the lab and then related the process to chromatography.

In another collaborative lesson, students in both content areas work to create recipes in metric units while making ice cream. They also learn about lab safety, sanitation

As a new professional, Fant has taken leadership roles in professional organizations and promotes Family and Consumer Science programs across the state. She co-authored and presented the Hospitality Services Statewide Curriculum Program for Western Kentucky University.

Barren County High Principal Keith Hale describes Fant as a phenomenal educator. "Her expertise and skill as a teacher ensures success for each and every student in her classroom. She cares deeply about her students and helps them achieve at high levels," said Hale.

Fant is the sponsor for Family, Career and

ply have a summer job in a related field is not the sole purpose. I teach skills that are applicable to any career. Students learn responsibility, self-worth, problem solving and much more," said Fant.

She also keeps in touch with many of her former students. "I measure success by seeing my students thrive in the real world," she explained. "I know that the results of my teaching may never be seen directly, but I do know that I have offered skills to help them have a successful life whether they are providing services to their community, working to provide for themselves or continuing their education."

"I teach skills that are applicable to any career. Students learn responsibility, self-worth, problem solving and much more."

-CheyAnne Fant

practices, freezing-point depression, chemical reactions of salt and much more.

During a unit on nutrition, biology classes joined the foods classes for a fast-

MORE INFO ...

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"CCSSO's impact on national education policy has been consistent and positive. I look forward to this chance to help shape state and national education policy to better serve all children in our public schools and to serve state education leaders across this country."

Wilhoit was named Kentucky's third commissioner of education in October 2000. Under his guidance, the Kentucky Depart-

ment of Education has streamlined its operations and placed greater focus on improving student learning and achievement.

As a member of CCSSO, Wilhoit has served as a member of the Legislative, Nominations and Internal Operations committees. He also traveled to China with a CCSSO delegation in 2005 to attend the U.S.-China Education Leaders Conference. He is a member of the Board of Directors for the

Southern Regional Educational Board.

A former social studies teacher, Wilhoit has served as program director for the Indiana Department of Public Instruction, executive director of the National Association of State Boards of Education and chief state school officer for the Arkansas Department of Education. Prior to being named Kentucky's education commissioner, he was deputy commissioner for the Department

of Education's Bureau of Learning Support Services.

CCSSO is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of education in each state, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense jurisdictions and U.S. territorial jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy and technical assistance on major educational issues.

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the results in a meaningful way to improve teaching and learning."

Schools and districts received their Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) results electronically in the form of the Kentucky Performance Report (KPR). The report gives detailed information on testing data in a variety of formats and disaggregations by content, student population and academic levels.

To better understand and use the data, administrators and teachers have the CATS Data Tools at their fingertips via the department's Web site (www.education.ky.gov). These Data Tools include:

- The KPR Workbook provides questions to help educators look at trend data and use subgroup information to focus on school improvement.
- CATS Calculators for elementary, middle and high schools allow users to enter either the number of students in each level in each content area or to use percentages. For example, a user could enter the number of low apprentice students in a content area into the calculator and see how moving them to high apprentice would affect the accountability index.
- The GAP Comparison Graphs allow users at each grade level to take the disaggregation index trends data from each content area and the academic index to chart information from 1999 to 2006. These charts will illustrate the gaps in student performance and show school progress on closing those achievement gaps among student populations.
- The Demographic Profiler helps schools quickly identify other schools that have similar student subpopulations. Once found, these schools can begin talking about strategies and practices to improve learning for these students.
- The Student Data Tool contains confidential information about each student in a district or school that was tested, including students with Alternate Portfolios. It allows users to find unique groups of students. For example, a user could identify results for all eighth-grade females on the free- and reduced- lunch program who also are in the gifted and talented program. District Assessment Coordinators and principals have established local policies and procedures on how teachers can get access to this confidential student data and use this data tool.

Once the data has been explored well below the waterline of the "results iceberg," teachers and administrators can begin looking at curriculum. Understanding state curriculum requirements and focusing on the individual student will help classroom teachers plan for the type of instruction that will improve learning.

On the department's Web site, teach-

ers can access curriculum documents and resources. *Kentucky's Program of Studies for Grades Primary - 12* provides the minimum required content standards students shall be taught to meet the high school graduation requirements. This document, updated this year, tells educators what state law says must be taught in schools, which is more than what is targeted for assessment.

Kentucky's Core Content for Assessment represents the subject matter that has been identified as essential for all students to know. Core content is the information within the *Program of Studies* that may appear on state assessments.

Version 4.1, updated in 2006, contains the content that will be used in the KCCT beginning in spring 2007. "Crosswalks" that illustrate the changes from Version 3.0 to Version 4.1 are available online. A new aspect of the core content document is the inclusion of Depth of Knowledge (DOK) indicators. DOK encourages rigor and relevance in the classroom by reflecting the depth of knowledge and cognitive complexity for the content standard that is appropriate for each grade level for the state assessment.

The DOK indicators are research-based and are not meant to limit instruction in the classroom but rather support learning and understanding expected in proficient and distinguished student performance. Teachers should use the DOK in content areas as a classroom instructional guide.

Also accessible online are test blueprints, which provide information about the structure and contents of the KCCT, and Teaching Tools, which help schools develop and use curriculum maps, standards-based units of study and a combined curriculum document (*Academic Expectations*, the *Program of Studies* and *Core Content for Assessment*).

These documents and resources will help teachers not only provide rigorous and relevant learning opportunities for students, but focus their planning on meaningful instruction that will improve teaching and learning.

MORE INFO ...

dacinfo@education.ky.gov
www.education.ky.gov — To access KDE Data Tools, click on "KDE QuickLinks" in the upper right-hand corner. Scroll down to "Tools and Resources" and click

To access Teaching Tools, click on "KDE QuickLinks," scroll down to "Teaching Tools" and click.



Photo by Tim Thornberry, Education Cabinet

Hearing from a real-world author

Fourth-grader Jake Ryan watches Woody the Wiener Dog and listens to Woody's owner, Kentucky author Leigh Anne Florence, as she talks about writing and being an author with his class at Mill Creek Elementary (Fayette County). Florence and Woody are visiting classrooms throughout the state to encourage reading and writing in conjunction with this fall's publication of "Tails from the Bluegrass II," a Newspapers in Education program. Florence has written two books about Woody's travels around Kentucky to help students learn more about state history and geography.



Talk to Us!

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Write: Kentucky Teacher
 612 Capital Plaza Tower
 500 Mero St.
 Frankfort, KY 40601

e-Learning Kentucky helps teachers improve instruction

By Cathy Lindsey

cathy.lindsey@education.ky.gov

Free professional development is now available online to Kentucky's public educators. e-Learning Kentucky allows teachers access to more than 20 professional development opportunities from any location at anytime. The seven-week courses are available to all Kentucky teachers who have a computer with Internet access.

The online courses are designed to improve teachers' content knowledge and

teaching practices in an effort to increase student achievement. Courses also offer interactivity between participants and the course facilitator to encourage sharing and professional collaboration.

"It's a great opportunity for Kentucky teachers across the state to form a community, to ask questions, to share ideas, to try lessons in their classes and to reflect together about the lesson," said Anne Robbins, assistant manager of the e-Learning Kentucky initiative. "It's a great oppor-

tunity for Kentucky teachers to find Web resources that are appropriate and available to them."

There are diverse learning opportunities for teachers in all content areas. Courses cover several Reading First lessons. Other offerings range from "Designing a Virtual Field Trip" to "Instructional Approaches for Teachers of ELL."

The course catalog and registration information are posted on the Kentucky Department of Education's Web site (www.education.ky.gov). All courses are free to Kentucky public educators except for the school-based decision making (SBDM) training courses. Kentucky's non-public educators and out-of-state educators may register for classes at a cost of \$50 per online course. Registration is available only online.

Courses are open for seven weeks. The first week provides an introduction and an opportunity to "Get Ready to Learn." Generally, participants will spend two to four hours per week on the coursework.

"Not only will these courses provide knowledge teachers can use the next day in their classrooms," Robbins said, "but taking the courses will help Kentucky teachers meet the technology standard."

Teachers can receive six to 24 hours of Effective Instructional Leadership Act (EILA) or professional development credit depending on the course and local school policies for professional development credit. The course catalog and syllabus give the number of hours for each course.

The fall session is currently under way. Registration opens for the spring session on Nov. 1 and closes on Jan. 15, 2007. The spring session runs from Jan. 15, 2007, through March 4, 2007. Summer registration opens April 1, 2007, and closes June 14, 2007. The 2007 summer session runs from

June 11 through July 29.

Schools and districts also can request "custom" courses to help meet the unique professional development needs and schedules of their staff. A minimum of 10 participants is required for custom courses.

"E-Learning offers diverse opportunities for teachers in all content areas."

Qualified Kentucky teachers have been trained to facilitate each course. To sustain online professional development, e-Learning Kentucky will continue to build capacity by training facilitators and course developers who can address the needs of Kentucky educators.

e-Learning Kentucky is part of e-Learning for Educators, a collaboration between nine state education agencies and associated public broadcast stations. Its goal is to form a consortium of professional development partners who can share resources and collaborate to provide diverse professional development to meet Kentucky educators' needs. e-Learning for Educators is funded through a grant provided by the U.S. Department of Education.

MORE INFO...

(866) 432-0008, Ext. 4551,
elarningkyinquiry@education.ky.gov
www.education.ky.gov — Click on
 "KDE QuickLinks" in the upper right-hand corner, scroll down to "e-Learning" and click to access the course catalog and registration.

Other online professional development opportunities are available at:
www.kvhs.org
<http://kyeducators.org>



Photo by Rick McComb

Transitioning to teaching

Chad Davis, a science teacher at Lloyd McGuffey Sixth Grade Center (Lincoln County), explains a question to student Angelina Nott. Davis, a former bank loan officer, is a participant in the Transition to Teaching program, which allows qualified candidates to complete requirements for teacher certification or a master's degree in teaching while working in the classroom.

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in their schools and districts to improve teaching and learning. Audiences for the workshops and concurrent sessions include administrators, teachers and other learners.

The KTLTC planning committee has issued a call for presenters for three-hour ticketed workshops and 1.5-hour concurrent sessions. All workshop and session presentations must be aligned with the Kentucky Standards and Indicators for School Improvement and/or ISTE's National Educational Technology Standards for Students, Teachers and Administrators.

Interested presenters can complete an application to present on the conference Web site listed below. Selected presenters will be notified of their acceptance in December.

Registration information, exhibitor registration and conference information also is posted on the Web site.

MORE INFO...

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Photo by Jeff Frehm, Carroll County Schools

We have ignition!

John Ritchie, a science teacher at Carroll County Middle School, and Ulysses Castanada, far left, Laura Rich, Brittany Shaw and Destiny Vititoe, students in his eighth-grade class, watch a rocket successfully blast off. The rocket launch was the culminating event of a physics unit on forces and motion.

Leadership Letter

Compiled by Joy Barr
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Kentucky ACT scores are on the rise in 2005

Kentucky high school students slightly improved their scores on the ACT college admission test last school year, but those scores continue to trail the national averages. The average Kentucky composite score from the four sections of the ACT was 20.6 for the 29,786 students who took the exam in 2006. That's up from 20.4 in 2005. The increase reflects a continuing trend of slight growth since 2002, when the average state score was 20.

Although overall Kentucky scores were lower than national averages across the board in English, mathematics, reading and science, larger percentages of students are meeting ACT's college readiness standards for those subjects.

All Kentucky public high school juniors will take the ACT in 2007-2008.

www.act.org/news/data/05/index.html

Kentucky graduation rates are closer to national average

Kentucky high school graduation rates are improving and are nearing the national average. Seventy-nine percent of Kentuckians completed high school in 2005 com-

pared to the national average of 84.2. The U.S. Census Bureau numbers, however, show that only Texas and Mississippi rank below Kentucky in the percentage of adults with at least a high school diploma or equivalent degree.

Kentucky's rise in national standing is due in part to large numbers of Hispanic immigrants in western and southwestern states who do not have diplomas and are causing decreases in those states.

Poll gauges attitudes toward public schools

Phi Delta Kappa, the international professional educators' organization, released its 38th annual poll of the public's attitude toward public schools. The survey included 1,000 respondents and was conducted in June 2006.

Some of the poll's conclusions stand out:

Nearly six in 10 Americans who are familiar with the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act believe it has had no effect on public schools or has actually harmed them. Most find this conclusion significant given that the nation's schools are spending virtually all of their available money and resources to meet the demands of the law.

There is widespread support for closing the achievement gap. Survey respondents believe that the gap can be closed and that it can be done within the current system. Most believe that the gap is not the fault of schools, noting that parents and students are

responsible for what students learn. Many say that, rather than transferring their children from a school needing improvement, they would prefer to have additional help in their children's current schools.

In contrast to the public's pessimistic view of NCLB, the poll found strong support for public schools. When asked where efforts should focus to improve education, 71 percent of those surveyed said that they prefer improvement to come through the existing public school system, rather than through an alternative system. Sixty percent oppose the use of public funds for children to attend private schools.

www.pdkintl.org

Graves County Schools confront America's low diploma completion rate

Graves County school leaders have challenged district schools and the Mayfield community to address America's low rate of diploma completion.

"Between one-fourth and one-third of freshmen entering high school in this country do not graduate four years later, and many of them never earn a diploma or a GED," said Jennifer Smith, Graves County's director of pupil personnel. "It's a major problem throughout America. We, in Graves County, have chosen to confront the brutal facts and do something about it. We believe that we, as a school district and community as a whole, are better than

that." She said the entire community has a stake in improving the graduation rate and hopes citizens and groups throughout Graves County will join in the effort.

Smith explained that technical requirements to count a student as a "dropout" make the dropout rate appear quite low – often only two or three percent – at schools throughout Kentucky and the U.S. "Completion rate," by comparison, measures the difference between entering freshmen and graduates four years later.

"A typical freshman class at Graves County High School has an enrollment of nearly 400 students," she explained. "A typical senior class graduates 250 to 260 students. We're losing 140 to 150 kids over the course of the high school years and the fact that the national average is similar doesn't make it any less of a problem. We have a moral obligation to confront this situation, and we will confront it in Graves County, whether other schools confront it or not."

District officials announced a goal of "100/300/2014" at the opening day for faculty and staff. The first and last numbers refer to Kentucky's goal of every school's reaching proficiency on its Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) accountability index by the year 2014. The 300 figure is the goal for the number of graduates in the Graves County High Class of 2014.

"Our district is doing very well academically, instructionally, with competitive programs, and in many other ways," said Superintendent Brady Link. "... I'm gratified that our people want to do something positive about a problem and are embracing the effort to increase the number of graduates. This is not a high school problem or a secondary problem. This is a problem of all education and of all communities."

Contact: Paul Schaumburg, community relations director, (270) 328-1556, paul.schaumburg@graves.kyschools.us

PD for principals

The Kentucky Association of Elementary School Principals will hold its fall conference Nov. 12-14 at the Galt House in Louisville. The theme is "Kentucky Elementary School Principals: Leaders and Learners."

www.kaesp.org

FEA state conference

The Kentucky Department of Education's Division of Educator Quality and Diversity will host its 4th annual Future Educators of America (FEA) conference Nov. 21-22 at the Galt House in Louisville.

The division staff strives to recruit highly qualified individuals into teaching, improve the quality of teacher education, encourage minority candidates to enter teaching and provide continuous assistance to current teachers through collaboration with colleges, academic departments and local school districts.

For more information about the conference or to start an FEA chapter, contact Jennifer Miller, (502) 564-1479, jennifer.miller@education.ky.gov.



Photo by Rick McComb

Working together to benefit all

Community, business and education leaders from Kentucky and around the country attended the September conference on School Desegregation to address educational issues related to desegregation of public schools. David Hawpe, editorial director of The Courier-Journal, left, Kentucky Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit, state Sen. Gerald Neal and Marsha Smith, a member of the National Education Association executive commission, were part of a panel discussion that focused on creating a vision for Kentucky's education system that will benefit all students.

School media centers move into 21st century

By Faun S. Fishback

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These are not your mothers' libraries. In fact, they may bear no resemblance to the school libraries of your past.

The library media specialists (LMS) at these Kentucky schools are part of instructional teams, collaborating with classroom teachers to enrich core content instruction. They're creating media centers that entice students at all levels to read. They're managing media centers that are used by students, parents and community residents for all types of learning activities.

Flexible scheduling

At many elementary schools, students spend time in the library media center as a regularly scheduled enrichment class to learn library skills and check out books. LMS Becky Nelson operates the Hearn Elementary (Franklin County) media center on a flexible schedule. This allows students and teachers to use the library any time they need it.

As a result, Nelson has become a part of the teaching team through her collaboration with classroom teachers on instruction. She helps teachers pull together age-appropriate resource materials—books, feature articles, Web sites, graphic organizers, PowerPoint slides—on a particular subject or prepares resources for a grade-level unit that will be taught across the curriculum.

"Flexible scheduling allows the librarian and teachers to collaborate in teaching the core content," Nelson said. "Library skills are taught in conjunction with classroom assignments and projects."

Nelson offers a variety of reading programs to excite intermediate students to read. She reads to

the Lunch Bunch reading group while they eat brown-bag lunches and discuss the book. Intermediate students also participate in the Battle of the Books competition, which requires reading high-quality books and answering questions about them during district competition.

In addition, Hearn Elementary has a book club for mothers and daughters and one for boys. As part of the Adopt-a-Shelf project, students take responsibility for maintaining certain book shelves in the media center.

A learning community

"The hub of the school"—that was Corbin Independent Superintendent Ed McNeel's vision for the Corbin High School's media center when it opened four years ago. LMS Brenda Jones says the vision has become a reality.

Students are "in here constantly" because there is so much to do, Jones says. Students can come as individuals and in classes to read, do research and



Tates Creek High School (Fayette County) students gather in *The Bookmark*, a coffee shop located in the media center, before school begins to have something to drink, hang out with friends, study and read.



At Hearn Elementary (Franklin County), students like fourth grader Matt Johnson adopt shelves in the library. Students keep the shelves dusted, books in order and set up displays to entice other students to read from those shelves.

check out books.

However, the center also houses a computer lab, areas for teacher/student conferences, class areas to work and hold teacher professional development, student-run radio and TV studios, and a videoconferencing lab where students and adults in the community can take distance-learning classes or online honors and Advanced Placement courses.

One area of the center provides space for students to gather before school. It's also available for classroom and PowerPoint presentations during the school day.

The media center and Redhound Café are open until 5:30 p.m. for after-school enrichment

programs such as chess, homework help, foreign language instruction and ACT preparation classes. The center also provides a meeting place for community book clubs, student and parent organizations, and local civic and

business groups.

Jones maintains a flexible scheduling calendar that allows her to collaborate with teachers and provide resources for class assignments. She also compiles the "Great Reads for CHS" booklist, manages the Accelerated Reader program and orders cur-

rent titles for the center.

"We want to keep the students coming in the media center to read and to be excited about being here," Jones said.

Happening place to be

The media center is a happening place to be before school at Tates Creek High School (Fayette County). Students and faculty alike are drawn to the center's "upscale bookstore atmosphere" that invites people to relax and read.

LMS Amber Mauney Tongate says more than 200 students gather in the media center and *The Bookmark* coffee shop each morning to do homework, study, type a paper, work on Web homework, drink coffee or hot chocolate, check out books or hang out with friends in a safe place before school starts.

The library staff use décor (including a recent make-over of the space) and book placement to create student excitement for reading and researching. The center's fiction collection is arranged and labeled by genre (mystery, adventure, sports, African American and more), like in a bookstore, to help readers quickly locate books, Tongate said.

Last spring, the media center staff collaborated with teachers in the English Department to revamp the summer reading list to include young adult literature for students taking advanced,

ACE or AP English classes. Several teachers used a blog for students to share comments on their summer reading.

The Faculty & Student Book Club is in its second year of monthly meetings in *The Bookmark*. Administrators, teachers and students read young adult books and discuss them. Teachers receive 30 minutes of professional development credit for reading the books and participating in the club this school year. The TCHS Cyber Book Club was created for students who prefer discussing the selected book via a blog rather than in a meeting.

"We're on our way to being a world-class library," Tongate said. "Once all 'Creekers' become great readers and researchers, we will have achieved our goal!"

MORE INFO ...

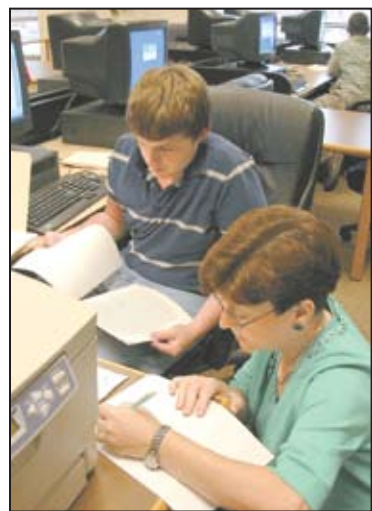
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www.education.ky.gov — Click on "KDE QuickLinks," scroll down to "Library Media" and click.



Corbin (Independent) High School teacher Pam Bishop conferences with Justin Spencer as he works on a transactive writing piece in one area of the media center that provides computers, work space and a place to talk.